

Legends and Tales

IN

Prose and Verse

Compiled by
Isabel E. Cohen



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The Birth of Man

A LEGEND OF THE TALMUD

BY EMMA LAZARUS

WHEN angels visit earth, the messengers
Of God's decree, they come as lightning,
wind:

Before the throne, they all are living fire.
There stand four rows of angels—to the right
The hosts of Michael, Gabriel's to the left,
Before, the troop of Ariel, and behind,
The ranks of Raphael; all, with one accord,
Chanting the glory of the Everlasting.
Upon the high and holy throne there rests,
Invisible, the majesty of God.
About His brows the crown of mystery
Whereon the sacred letters are engraved
Of the unutterable Name. He grasps
A sceptre of keen fire; the universe

Is compassed in His glance ; at His right hand
Life stands, and at His left hand standeth Death.

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Lo, the divine idea of making man
Had spread abroad among the heavenly hosts ;
And all at once before the immortal throne
Pressed troops of angels and of seraphim,
With minds opposed, and contradicting cries :
“ Fulfil, Great Father, Thine exalted thought !
Create and give unto the earth her king ! ”
“ Cease, cease, Almighty God ! create no more ! ”
And suddenly upon the heavenly sphere
Deep silence fell ; before the immortal throne
The angel Mercy knelt, and thus he spoke :
“ Fulfil, Great Father, Thine exalted thought !
Create the likeness of Thyself on earth.
In this new creature I will breathe the spirit
Of a divine compassion ; he shall be
Thy fairest image in the universe.”

But to his words the angel Peace replied,
With heavy sobs: "My spirit was outspread,
O God, on Thy creation, and all things
Were sweetly bound in gracious harmony.
But man, this strange new being, everywhere
Shall bring confusion, trouble, discord, war."
"Avenger of injustice and of crime,"
Exclaimed the angel Justice, "he shall be
Subject to me, and peace shall bloom again.
Create, O Lord, create!" "Father of truth,"
Implored with tears the angel Truth, "Thou
bring'st
Upon the earth the father of all lies!"
And over the celestial faces gloomed
A cloud of grief, and stillness deep prevailed.
Then from the midst of that abyss of light
Whence sprang the eternal throne, these words
rang forth:
"Be comforted, my daughter! Thee I send
To be companion unto man on earth."

And all the angels cried, lamenting loud :
"Thou robbest heaven of her fairest gem.
Truth! seal of all Thy thoughts, Almighty God,
The richest jewel that adorns Thy crown."
From the abyss of glory rang the voice :
"From heaven to earth, from earth once more to
 heaven,
Shall Truth, with constant interchange, alight
And soar again, an everlasting link
Between the world and sky."
 And man was born.

The Conformation of Man

TALMUDIC ALLEGORY

(From *The Hebrew Review*)

THE Creator descended. All the Angels, the Princes of the elements, beheld and contemplated His work.

He called to the dust. And dust gathered itself from all the quarters of the terrestrial globe. And the Angel of earth said, "This frame will be a mortal creature, wheresoever it dwells upon earth: for it is dust and must return unto dust."

He called to the heavenly cloud; and it moistened the dust. The clay began to heave and shape itself into vessels and compartments. And the Angel of the waters exclaimed, "Thou wilt require nourishment, thou curiously constructed creature! Hunger and thirst will become inseparable from thy being." Inwardly the veins and

cells began to be formed; the manifold outward limbs assumed their shape, and the Angel of the living said, "Thou wilt be subject to many desires, beauteous and scientific creation! Love of thy species will attract and impel thee!"

The Creator approached with His daughters, Wisdom and Love. With paternal kindness He raised the inanimate clay and breathed into it life and immortality. Man stood erect: delighted, he looked around. "Behold!" said the voice of the Most High, "all the growth of the meadows and trees, all the animals that dwell upon earth, I have given to thee. Thy fatherland, the earth, is thine, and thou shalt rule it: but thou thyself art Mine; thy breath is My gift, and when thy time cometh, I summon it unto Myself!"

Wisdom and Love, the offsprings of God, stayed with the new lord of the earth. They instructed him and taught him to know animate and inanimate nature. They conversed with him as

loving companions, and their light was with innocent man.

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Man lives his allotted time on earth, happy if Wisdom and Love deign to cheer him with their influence. But when his allotted time expires, his body returns to mix with the elements whence it was taken: but the spirit returns again to God, by whose paternal embrace it was breathed into him.

The Trees of Paradise

TALMUDIC ALLEGORY

(From *The Hebrew Review*)

WHEN the Deity led man into his paradise, all the trees of the garden of Eden saluted the favored of the Lord; with waving branches they offered him their fruits for his food, the fragrant shade of their boughs for his refreshment.

“O that he would prefer me!” said the palm tree. “I will feed him with my golden dates, and the wine of my juice shall be his beverage. My leaves should form his tranquil hut, and my branches spread their shadows above him.” “I will shower my odoriferous blossoms upon thee,” exclaimed the apple-tree, “and my choicest fruits shall be thy nourishment.”

Thus all the trees of paradise greeted their

new-created lord; and his Supreme Benefactor permitted him to enjoy their rich offerings. Of all He gave him liberty to partake. One fruit only he was forbidden to taste—that which grew on the *tree of knowledge*.

“A tree of knowledge!” said man within himself. “All other trees yield me but terrestrial, corporeal nourishment; but this tree, which would elevate my spirit and strengthen the powers of my mind, this tree alone I am forbidden to enjoy.” Yet he silenced the voice of desire, and suppressed the rebellious thought which arose in his bosom. But when the voice and example of temptation assailed him, he tasted the pernicious fruit, the juice of which still ferments in our hearts.

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“Hard is the prohibition which is laid upon man,” said the angelic spirits of heaven; “for

what can be more tempting to a being who is gifted with reason than the acquisition of knowledge? And shall he, who soon will transgress the command, therefore be punished with death?"

"Wait and behold his punishment," replied the dulcet voice of celestial love. "Even on the path of his errors, amidst the pangs of repentance and the stings of remorse,—even there will I be his guide, and conduct him to another tree, that grows in his heavenly home."

The Shepherd

TALMUDIC ALLEGORY

(From *The Hebrew Review*)

I N the silent midnight hour preceding the vernal festival, on which the first brothers were to bring their offering of gratitude to the Creator, their mother, in a dream, beheld a wondrous vision. The white roses which her younger son had planted round his altar had changed their hue: they were become more blood-red, more fully blown, than any she had ever seen; she tried to break them, but they withered at her touch. On the altar lay a bleeding lamb. Plaintive voices rose around her, and amongst them a shriek of piercing despair, till all were lost, mingled in a heavenly harmony, the like of which she had never heard before.

And a beauteous plain lay before her, more beauteous even than the paradise of her youth.

And a shepherd, in the shape and image of her son, arrayed in robes of blinding white, tended his flocks. The red roses formed a garland which entwined his brows, and in his hand he held a lute, from which went forth the harmony of heaven. His mild eye beamed affectionately on her; but when she approached to take his hand, he vanished, and with him the vision of her dreams.

The mother of our race arose as the ruddy dawn illumined the sky; with a heavy heart she went to the festival.

The brothers brought their sacrifice. Their parents departed. Evening came, but the sons returned not. Their anxious mother went forth to seek them. She found Abel's flocks scattered and mournfully lowing. He himself lay lifeless at the foot of the altar. His blood dyed the roses he had planted; and Cain's groans of anguish resounded from a neighboring cavern.

Fainting she sank on the corpse of her son, when again she beheld the nocturnal vision of her dream. Her son was the shepherd whom she had seen in the beauteous fields of the new paradise. The red roses were twined round his brows; in his hand he held a harp, and his soft accents fell sweetly on her ear as he sung to her: "Look up to the heavens, to the stars. Look up, all weeping as thou art, my mother. Behold yon splendid wain, it leads to fields more blooming, to a paradise more beauteous, than thou ever sawest in Eden's garden, where the blood-stained rose of suffering innocence blooms in celestial splendor, and its sighs are turned into tunes of rapture."

The vision vanished. But with a strengthened mind and confident resignation, Eve rose from the inanimate body of her son. The next morning his parents bedewed it with their scalding tears, crowned it with the roses dyed in his life-blood, and buried him at the foot of the altar he had

raised to the Lord, in the presence of the mild dawn which spread its orient tints over the sky.

Often they sat at his tomb in the silent hour of midnight: their eyes were lifted to heaven; there they sought their beloved shepherd; there they hoped to be reunited to him.

The Death of Adam

TALMUDIC ALLEGORY

(From *The Hebrew Review*)

NINE hundred and thirty years had passed from the moment when the breath of the Creator gave life to the clay, when Adam felt within himself the sentence of the Judge, "*Thou shalt surely die.*"

"Let all my sons appear before me," he said to the weeping Eve. "Let them all come that I may once more see and bless them." His descendants all came obedient to their father's command. Many hundreds in number, they all stood around him and wept; all prayed for his life.

"Who among you," said Adam, "will ascend the holy mount? Perhaps he may find mercy for me, and bring me the fruit of the tree of life." All his sons arose; each was willing to go: but

the father selected Seth, the most pious among them, to be the messenger of imploring pity.

His head strewn with ashes, he tarried not, but hastened on, till he reached the gates of paradise. "Let him find mercy, All-Merciful," he implored, "and send my father the fruit of the tree of life."

Suddenly a radiant cherub stood before him; in his hand he held, not fruit, but a branch with one solitary leaf. "Convey this to thy father," he said, with a friendly voice; "convey it to cheer his parting hour, for eternal life dwells not on earth. But haste thee, for his hour is come."

The father of humankind took the branch and rejoiced; he inhaled the odor of paradise, and his soul became invigorated. "My children," he said, "everlasting life we find not on earth; you all will follow me. But in this leaf I scent, I breathe the air of another world, of immortality." His eye closed; his spirit fled.

Adam's children buried their father, and

mourned for him thirty days. But Seth wept not, and mourned not. He planted the branch at the head of his father's tomb, and called it the branch of renovated life, of awaking from the sleep of death.

The Entrance into the Ark

BY JEAN INGELOW

(From *A Story of Doom*)

AND Noah went up into the ship, and sat
Before the Lord. And all was still; and now
In that great quietness the sun came up,
And there were marks across it, as it were
The shadow of a Hand upon the sun,—
Three fingers dark and dread, and afterward
There rose a white thick mist, that peacefully
Folded the fair earth in her funeral shroud,—
The earth that gave no token, save that now
There fell a little trembling under foot.
And Noah went down, and took and hid his face
Behind his mantle, saying, "I have made
Great preparation, and it may be yet,
Beside my house, whom I did charge to come
This day to meet me, there may enter in

Many that yesternight thought scorn of all
My bidding." And because the fog was thick,
He said, "Forbid it, Heaven, if such there be,
That they should miss the way." And even then
There was a noise of weeping and lament;
The words of them that were affrighted, yea,
And cried for grief of heart. There came to him
The mother and her children, and they cried,
"Speak, father, what is this? What hast thou
done?"

And when he lifted up his face, he saw
Japhet, his well-beloved, where he stood
Apart; and Amarant leaned upon his breast,
And hid her face, for she was sore afraid;
And lo! the robes of her betrothal gleamed
White in the deadly gloom.

And at his feet
The wives of his two other sons did kneel,
And wring their hands.

One cried, "O speak to us;
We are affrighted; we have dreamed a dream,
Each to herself. For me, I saw in mine
The grave old angels, like to shepherds, walk,
Much cattle following them. Thy daughter looked,
And they did enter here."

The other lay
And moaned, "Alas! O father, for my dream
Was evil: lo, I heard when it was dark,
I heard two wicked ones contend for me.
One said, 'And wherefore should this woman live,
When only for her children, and for her,
Is woe and degradation?' Then he laughed,
The other crying, 'Let alone, O Prince;
Hinder her not to live and bear much seed,
Because I hate her.'"

But he said, "Rise up,
Daughter of Noah, for I have learned no words

To comfort you." Then spake her lord to her,
"Peace! or I swear that for thy dream myself
Will hate thee also."

And Niloiya said,
"My sons, if one of you will hear my words,
Go now, look out, and tell me of the day,
How fares it?"

And the fateful darkness grew.
But Shem went up to do his mother's will;
And all was one as though the frightened earth
Quivered and fell a-trembling; then they hid
Their faces every one, till he returned,
And spake not. "Nay," they cried, "what hast
thou seen?
O, is it come to this?" He answered them,
"The door is shut."

The Ark and the Dove

BY LYDIA H. SIGOURNEY

TELL me a story—please,” my little girl
Lisped from her cradle. So I bent me down
And told her how it rained, and rained, and rained,
Till all the flowers were covered, and the trees
Hid their tall heads, and where the houses stood,
And people dwelt, a fearful deluge rolled;
Because the world was wicked, and refused
To heed the words of God. But one good man,
Who long had warned the wicked to repent,
Obey, and live, taught by the voice of Heaven,
Had built an Ark; and thither, with his wife
And children, turned for safety. Two and two,
Of beasts and birds, and creeping things he took,
With food for all; and when the tempest roared,
And the great fountains of the sky poured out
A ceaseless flood, till all beside were drowned,
They in their quiet vessel dwelt secure.

And so the mighty waters bare them up,
And o'er the bosom of the deep they sailed
For many days. But then a gentle dove
'Scaped from the casement of the Ark, and spread
Her lonely pinions o'er that boundless wave.
All, all was desolation. Chirping nest,
Nor face of man, nor living thing she saw,
For all the people of the earth were drowned,
Because of disobedience. Naught she spied
Save wide, dark waters, and a frowning sky,
Nor found her weary foot a place of rest.
So, with a leaf of olive in her mouth,
Sole fruit of her drear voyage, which, perchance,
Upon some wrecking billow floated by,
With drooping wing the peaceful Ark she sought.
The righteous man that wandering dove received,
And to her mate restored, who, with sad moans,
Had wondered at her absence.

Then I looked
Upon the child, to see if her young thought

Wearied with following mine. But her blue eye
Was a glad listener, and the eager breath
Of pleased attention curled the parted lip.
And so I told her how the waters dried,
And the green branches waved, and the sweet buds
Came up in loveliness, and the meek dove
Went forth to build her nest, while thousand birds
Awoke their songs of praise, and the tired Ark
Upon the breezy breast of Ararat
Reposed, and Noah, with glad spirit, reared
An altar to his God.

The Gift of the King

BY S. BARING-GOULD

(From *Legends of the Patriarchs and Prophets*)

NIMROD the Cushite sat upon a throne
Of gold, encrusted with a sapphire stone,
And round the monarch stood, in triple rank,
Three hundred ruddy pages, like a bank

Of roses all a-blow.

Two gentle boys, with blue eyes clear as glass,
And locks as light as tufted cotton grass,

And faces as the snow

That lies on Ararat, and flushes pink
On summer evenings, as the sun doth sink,
Were stationed by the royal golden chair
With fillets of carnation in their hair,
And clothed in silken vesture, candid, clean,
To flutter fans of burnished blue and green,

Fashioned of peacock's plume.
A little lower, on a second stage
On either side, was placed a graceful page,
 To raise a fragrant fume—
With costly woods and gums on burning coals
That glowed on tripods, in bright silver bowls ;
And at the basement of the marble stair,
Sweet singing choirs and harping minstrels were,
In amber kirtles, purple, gilt, and sashed.
The throbbing strings in silver ripples flashed,
 Where slaves the choral song
Accompanied with psaltery and lyre,
In red and saffron, like to men of fire,
 Whilst hoarsely boomed the gong :
Or silver cymbals clashed, or, waxing shrill,
Danced up the scale a flute's melodious thrill.

Now at the monarch's signal, pages twain,
With sunny hair as ripened autumn grain,
And robed in lustrous silver tissue, shot
With changing hues of blue forget-me-not,

Start nimbly forth, and bend
Before the monarch, at his gilded stool,
And crystal goblets brimming, sweet and cool,
Obsequiously extend ;
But Nimrod, slightly stirring, stately, calm,
Towards the right-hand beaker thrusts his arm,
And languid, raises it towards his lips ;
Yet ere he of the ruby liquor sips,
He notices upon the surface lie—
Fallen in and fluttering—a feeble fly,

With draggled wings outspread.
Then shot from Nimrod's eyes an angry flare,
And passionately down the marble stair
The costly draught he shed.
He spoke no word, but with a finger wave
Made signal to a scarlet-vested slave ;
And as the lad before him, quaking, kneels,
Above him swift the gleaming falchion wheels,
Then flashes down, and, with one leap, his head
Bounds from his shoulders, and bespirts with red

The alabaster floor.

And, mingled with the outpoured Persian wine,
Descends the steps a sliding purple line

Of smoking, dribbled gore ;

And floats the little midge upon a flood
Of fragrant grape-juice, and of roseate blood.

Then Nimrod said : " I would yon ugly stain
Were wiped away ; and thou, my chamberlain,
Obtain for me a stripling, to replace

This petty fool. Let him have comely face,

And be of slender mould :

Be lithely built, of noble birth ; a youth,
The choicest thou canst find. His cost, in sooth,

I heed not. Stint no gold,

But buy a goodly slave : for I, a king,

Will have the best, the best of everything—

Of gems, of slaves, of fabrics, meats, or wine ;

The best, the very best on earth be mine."

Then, prostrate flung before his master's throne,
The servant said, "Sire, Terah hath a son
Whose equal in the whole round world is none,
Beloved as himself.

But, Sire, I fear the father will not deign
To yield his son as slave through love of gain,
For great is he in wealth."

"Go," said the monarch, "I must have the child:
Be sure the father can be reconciled,
If you expend of gold a goodly store,
And, if he haggles at your price, bid more;
I will it, chamberlain!

I care not what the cost. I'll have the lad!"
And then he leaned him idly back, and bade
The slaves to fan again.

Now on the morrow, to the royal court,
Terah Ben-Nahor from old Ur was brought—
Protesting loud he would not yield his son
As slave, at any price, to any one.

“ My flesh and blood be sold !
Fie on you ! Do you reckon that I prize
My first-begotten as mere merchandise,
 To barter him for gold ?
A curse on him who would the old man’s stay,
That bears him up, with money buy away !
Require me not to offer child of mine
To serve and brim a tyrant’s cup with wine ;
To waste a life from morning to its grave,
Branded in mind and soul and body ‘ Slave ! ’

 How could I be repaid ?
His artless fondlings, all his childish ways :
The reminiscences of olden days,
 That sudden flash and fade,
Of her who bore him—her, my boyhood’s choice—
Resemblances in feature, figure, voice,
In gesture, manner, ay, in very tone
Of pealing laugh, of that dear partner gone.
Thou, Nimrod, to an old man condescend
To hear his story ; your attention lend,

And judge if acted well.

Last year to me thou gav'st a goodly steed,
From thine own stud, of purest Yemen breed :

And thus it me befel :

A stranger offered me a price so fair
That I accepted it, and sold the mare."

"My gift disposed of!" with an angry start,
King Nimrod thundered: "Thou, old man, shalt
smart

For this thy avarice. A royal gift,
Thou knowest well, must never owners shift,
As thing of little worth."

Then Terah raised his trembling hands, and said,
"From thine own mouth, O King, has judgment
sped.

The Lord of heaven and earth,
The King of kings to me my offspring gave,
And shall I sell His gift to be a slave?
Nimrod, that child, which is His royal gift,—
Thy mouth hath said it,—may not owners shift."

The Infancy of Abraham

TALMUDIC ALLEGORY

(From *The Hebrew Review*)

ABRAHAM was reared in a cavern; for the tyrant Nimrod, forewarned by his astrologers that the infant son of Terah would teach mankind to renounce the service of the imaginary divinities which Nimrod worshipped, sought to take his life. But in the darksome cavern the light of God illumined his youthful mind; he reflected, and asked himself, "Whence am I? Who has created me?"

He had reached the age of sixteen years when he left his dreary abode, and, for the first time, beheld the heavens and their resplendent orbs, the earth and its fulness. How astonished was he, and how rejoiced! He interrogated all creation

around him: "Whence are ye? Who has created you?"

The sun arose in its glory. Abraham prostrated himself. "This," he exclaimed, "must be the Creator: great and beauteous is its appearance; its radiance dazzles my feeble eye."

The sun pursued its course, and set at even-tide, to make room for the silvery moon: and Abraham said to himself, "The luminary which has set cannot be the God of heaven: it yields to yonder lesser light, and to the host of stars by which it is attended."

But clouds overspread the sky; the moon and the stars were hidden from his sight; and Abraham stood alone in the midst of his meditations.

He went to his father, and asked:

"Who is God, the Creator of heaven and earth?" Terah showed him his idols. "I will put their divinity to the test," said Abraham to himself; and, when he was alone, he presented

them with the choicest viands, addressed them, and said, "If ye are living gods, accept my offering that I may worship you." But unmovable stood the idols; no ear had they for his invocations.

"And these," exclaimed the youth, "my father considers as gods! But perhaps I may show him he is in error." He took a staff and shivered the idols into fragments, except one only, within whose bended arm he placed his staff. He then hurried to his father, and said, "Father, thy great god has slain his lesser brethren."

But Terah looked at him in anger, and said, "Mock me not, boy! How can he do what thou hast said, since mine own hands have fashioned him who is inanimate?" And Abraham replied: "Be not angry, O my father, but let thine ear hear, and thy reason weigh, what thine own mouth has uttered. If thou deemest him incapable of a feat which my boyish hand was capable of

performing, how can he be the god whose power created thee and me, and the heaven and earth?" And Terah stood silent before the reproof of his son.

Abram the Idol-Breaker

A TALMUDIC LEGEND

BY EMMA LEIGH

ABRAM stood musing in the midst of the deserted room. Everywhere he turned his gaze was met by a fixed, wooden stare. A smile of scorn played about his lips as he recalled the charge of Terah his father: "I will be gone but a short while. Do thou see to it that no harm comes to these our gods." Gods? These ugly images, the handiwork of Terah and his slaves, of which he strangely stood in awe?

Suddenly Abram became conscious that he was not alone. An old man had entered during his reverie, and was standing before one of the images. Seeing that the boy's attention had been attracted, the man asked the price of the idol which had taken his fancy. Abram told him, and

then said: "Be not angry if I ask thee the number of thy years."

"Three-score," was the proud reply.

"Three-score years hast thou lived, and yet thou payest reverence to this, the work of man's hands, and dost worship as thy lord the creation of a day?"

Shamefaced the old man turned away from the reproach of the boyish eyes.

As he left the place without his intended purchase, there entered a woman. In her hands was food, a prayer offering to the gods. With Abram's consent, she placed it at the feet of the image of Nebo, her favorite deity.

As she turned to go, Abram withheld her.

"Tarry but a little, so that thou mayest see how eagerly thy god eats thy offering when his hunger is aroused."

It was a bewildered glance that fell on Abram as she hastily left the place.

The youth laughed aloud. A moment more and he seized a hammer and broke in pieces all the images save one, that of Bel, the largest. In its hands he placed the hammer and waited his father's return.

No sooner had Terah beheld the ruin than he called his son.

"What work is this?" he demanded angrily. "What impious wretch has dared to do evil to the holy gods?"

"Father," Abram made answer, "in thy absence there came a woman with tasty food which she placed before one of the lesser gods. When he stretched forth his hand to partake thereof, the others, in their greed and envy, demanded a portion, which he arrogantly refused, bidding them wait for the offerings of their own worshippers. Then they strove to take it from him by force, and there was a mighty uproar, till the big god bade them cease their wrangling, terming it a

fashion unseemly for the rulers of the world. But they heeded not his voice, whereupon in his wrath the mighty god did lay violent hands upon these others and destroy them even as thou seest."

"Dost mock thy father?" demanded the wrathful Terah. "Surely, this figure of wood that my slaves have made can stir neither hand nor foot."

"Yet," said his son, "thou dost bend thy knee before it, and dost call upon it to help thee, and wouldst have me likewise worship it."

"Ay, that I will," said his father. "I see now it is thy profane hand that hath wrought this havoc. Down on thy face before mighty Bel, and pray pardon for thy sin."

"Nay, father," said the boy, "I would not fail in honor to my parent, and in naught else will I refuse to heed thy command, but this will my soul not let me do."

"Then will I take thee before Nimrod, who has means to induce obedience."

So Abram was led before the king. After hearing the story of the irate Terah, and Abram's refusal to worship images that could be made and broken by the hands of men, Nimrod said, "Yet must there be none in my dominion that refuses all worship to the gods. If images please thee not, worship the mighty Powers—adore the Fire."

"May the great king live forever," answered Abram, "and pardon thy servant if he speak too boldly; but if we seek the mightiest, were it not better to pray to that which is stronger than fire—the water which quenches it?"

"If it please thee better, worship Water."

"Pardon, my lord king, but it has come upon me that the cloud carries the water and is therefore more powerful."

"Then if that seem good to thee, worship the Cloud."

"Nay, my lord, grant thy servant yet another

word, for, behold, there is a force that is greater even than the cloud—the wind that drives the cloud before its fury.”

“Then worship the Wind,” said Nimrod, impatiently.

“May the king in his great goodness grant me to speak but once more,” said the boy, “and I have done. Fire I cannot worship. To water can I not pray. Neither to the cloud nor yet to the wind will I bow down. There is a Power mightier than all they. To Him alone will I bend the knee—El Shaddai, the One Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, who gave life to thee and me.”

“Where does thy god hide himself?” asked the king. “Never have I beheld him. Point him out to us that we may see his power. Mayhap thou canst gain him worshippers.”

“Eye cannot see His glory. Tongue cannot tell His might. Yet lift up thine eyes round about

and behold the earth, the heavens above, the water below, and all therein. At His word came all these."

Loud laughed the king and those that served him. "What madness is this? Can a god lurking where no human eye can find his abode have made the gods that rule the world, the sun whose arrows strike terror by day, the moon and the stars that hold sway over the fate of men, the hungry fire, the destroyer of all life? Can he have formed men, both rulers and slaves? Nay, the boy mocks us."

"Yea, and the blessed gods," cried one of the councillors.

"Blasphemer, mocker," shouted the court.

Then, in a smooth voice, which ill concealed his wrath, the king said, "Dost thou still defy the Fire?"

"Never will I prostrate myself to another save El Shaddai," again said the boy.

“Then if thou wilt not entreat the Fire’s favor, thou shalt feel the Fire’s wrath,” said Nimrod.

At a signal powerful slaves seized Abram, and cast him into the sacrificial furnace.

All stood with bated breath, listening for the victim’s cries of anguish, his call for mercy. No sound was heard save the roaring of the flames.

“Approach the furnace and see if the blasphemer be consumed,” ordered the king.

The servants obeyed and saw Abram standing in the midst of the flames, alive and unharmed, with calm countenance.

At the command of the astonished king he came forth. Not a hair of his head, not a thread of his garments, was singed.

Then Nimrod and his officers acknowledged that the God who protected Abram was mightier than the gods of Chaldea.

Hence, say the sages, is it written that Abram “came forth from Ur—the furnace—of the Chaldees.”

The Treasure of Abram

BY JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY

I.

IN the old Rabbinical stories,
So old they might well be true,—
The sacred tales of the Talmud,
That David and Solomon knew,—
There is one of Father Abram,
The greatest of Heber's race,
The mustard-seed of Judea
That filled the holy place.
'Tis said that the fiery heaven
His eye was first to read,
Till planets were gods no longer,
But helps for the human need;
He taught his simple people
The scope of eternal law
That swayed at once the fleecy cloud
And the circling suns they saw.

But the rude Chaldean peasants
Uprose against the seer,
And drave him forth—else never came
This Talmud legend here.
With Sarah his wife, and his servants,
Whom he ruled with potent hand,
The Patriarch planted his vineyards
In the Canaanitish land ;
With his wife—the sterile, but lovely,
The fame of whose beauty grew
Till there was no land in Asia
But tales of the treasure knew.
In his lore the sage lived—learning
High thoughts from the starlit skies ;
But heedful, too, of the light at home,
And the danger of wistful eyes ;
Till the famine fell on his corn-fields,
And sent him forth again,
To seek for a home in Egypt,
The land of the amorous men.

II.

Long and rich is the caravan that halts at Egypt's
gate,
While duty full the stranger pays on lowing herd
and freight.
Full keen the scrutiny of those who note the
heavy dues;
From weanling foal to cumbrous wain, no chance
of gain they lose.
But fair the search—no wealth concealed; while
rich the gifts they take
From Abram's hand, till care has ceased, and for-
mal quest they make.
They pass the droves and laden teams, the
weighted slaves are past,
And Abram doubles still the gifts; one wain, his
own, is last—
It goes unsearched! Wise Abram smiles, though
dearly stemmed the quest;

But haps will come from causes slight,
And hidden things upspring to light:
A breeze flings wide the canvas fold, and, deep
 within the wain, behold
A brass-bound massive chest!

“ Press on ! ” shouts Abram. “ Hold,” they cry ;
 “ what treasure hide ye here ? ”
The word is stern—the answer brief : “ Treasure !
 ’tis household gear ;
Plain linen cloth and flaxen thread.” The scribes
 deceived are wroth ;
“ Then weigh the chest—its price shall be the dues
 on linen cloth ! ”
The face of Abram seemed to grieve, though joy
 was in his breast,
As carefully his servants took and weighed the
 mighty chest.
But one hath watched the secret smile ; he cries,
 “ This stranger old

Hath used deceit; no cloth is here—this chest is filled with gold!”

“Nay, nay,” wise Abram says, and smiles, though now he hides dismay;

“But time is gold: let pass the chest—on gold the dues I pay!”

But he who reads the subtle smile detects the secret fear:

“Detain the chest! nor cloth nor gold, but precious silk is here!”

Grave Father Abram stands like one who knoweth well the sword

When tyros baffle thrust and guard; slow comes the heedful word:

“I seek no lawless gain—behold! my trains are on their way,

Else would these bands my servants break, and show the simple goods I take,

That silk ye call; but, for time’s sake, on silk the dues I pay!”

“He pays too much!” the watcher cries; “this
man is full of guile;
From cloth to gold and gold to silk, to save a
paltry mile!
This graybeard pay full silken dues on cloth for
slave-bred girls!
Some prize is here—he shall not pass until he pay
for pearls!”
Stern Abram turned a lurid eye, as he the man
would slay;
An instant, rose the self-command; but thin the
lip and quick the hand,
As one who makes a last demand: “On pearls
the dues I pay!”
“He cannot pass!” the watcher screamed, as to
the chest he clung;
“He shall not pass! Some priceless thing he
hideth here. Quick—workmen bring!
I seize this treasure for the king!”
Old Abram stood aghast; it seemed the knell of
doom had rung.

III.

Red-eyed with greed and wonder,
The crowd excited stand ;
The blows are rained like thunder
On brazen bolt and band ;
They burst the massive hinges,
They raise the ponderous lid,
And lo! the peerless treasure
That Father Abram hid :

In pearls and silk and jewels rare,
Fit for a Pharaoh's strife ;
In flashing eyes and golden hair—
Sat Abram's lovely wife !

Parable Against Persecution

BY BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

AND it came to pass after these things that Abraham sat in the door of his tent, about the going down of the sun.

2. And, behold, a man bent with age coming from the way of the wilderness, leaning on a staff.

3. And Abraham arose, and met him, and said unto him, Turn in, I pray thee, and wash thy feet, and tarry all night: and thou shalt arise early in the morning, and go on thy way.

4. And the man said, Nay; for I will abide under this tree.

5. But Abraham pressed him greatly: so he turned, and they went into the tent: And Abraham baked unleavened bread, and they did eat.

6. And when Abraham saw that the man

blessed not God, he said unto him, Wherefore dost thou not worship the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth?

7. And the man answered and said, I do not worship thy God, neither do I call upon his name, for I have made to myself a god, which abideth always in my house, and provideth me with all things.

8. And Abraham's zeal was kindled against the man, and he arose, and fell upon him, and drove him forth with blows into the wilderness.

9. And God called unto Abraham, saying, Abraham, where is the stranger?

10. And Abraham answered and said, Lord, he would not worship thee, neither would he call upon thy name, therefore have I driven him out from before my face, into the wilderness.

11. And God said, Have I borne with him these hundred and ninety and eight years, and nourished him, and clothed him, notwithstanding his

rebellion against me, and couldst not thou, who art thyself a sinner, bear with him one night?

12. And Abraham said, Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot against his servant; lo, I have sinned, forgive me, I pray thee.

13. And Abraham arose, and went forth into the wilderness and diligently sought for the man and found him, and returned with him to the tent, and when he had entreated him kindly, he sent him away on the morrow with gifts.

14. And God spake again unto Abraham saying, For this thy sin shall thy seed be afflicted four hundred years in a strange land.

15. But for thy repentance will I deliver them; and they shall come forth with power, and with gladness of heart, and with much substance.

Idud of Sodom

By H. POLANO

(Adapted from *Selections from the Talmud*)

IN olden days Sodom and four neighboring cities of the Plain about the Salt Sea were inhabited by men of evil deeds, who provoked the wrath of the Most High. They planted in the valley a beautiful garden many miles in extent, a place adorned with fruits and flowers, and objects pleasing to the sight and intoxicating to the senses. There four times a year they held idolatrous feasts with music and wild dancing and drunken excesses.

In their daily life they were both cruel and treacherous. They vexed the stranger, and took advantage of all who had dealings with them. When a trader who knew not their ways entered their city, they would seize his goods either with violence or through trickery, and if he complained,

they but mocked him and drove him from the place.

It happened once that a merchant of Elam, journeying to a place beyond Sodom, reached the latter city as the sun was setting. The saddle of his ass was richly ornamented, and precious merchandise was bound upon it. Unable to find lodging for himself and stabling for the animal, he resolved to pass the night in the streets of Sodom and continue his journey in the morning. A man of Sodom, named Hidud, chanced to observe this merchant, and even in the twilight his keen and covetous eye took notice of the valuable burden of the ass. Being as cunning as he was treacherous, he accosted the stranger, saying:

"Whence comest thou, and whither art thou travelling?"

"I am journeying from Hebron," replied the stranger; "my destination is beyond this place; but, lo, the sun has set; I can obtain no lodging,

and so I remain here in the streets. I have bread and water for myself and straw and provender for my beast, so I need trouble no one."

"Nay, this is wrong," returned Hidud. "Come, pass the night with me, thy lodging shall cost thee naught, and I will attend also to the wants of thy animal."

Hidud led the stranger to his house. The valuable saddle and the merchandise which was attached to it he removed from the ass, and placed his treasure in a chest. Then he gave the ass provender, and set meat and drink before the stranger, who partook of the meal, and lodged that night with him.

In the morning the stranger rose up early intending to pursue his journey, but Hidud said to him, "Take first thy morning meal, then go thy way."

After the man had eaten, he rose to go on his way, but Hidud stopped him, saying, "It is late

in the day; remain, I pray thee, bide with me yet this day and then depart."

The stranger remained in Hidud's house until the following morning, and then, declining another pressing invitation to remain one day more, he prepared for departure.

Then said Hidud's wife:

"This man has lived with us two days and paid us naught."

But Hidud answered:

"Keep thy peace."

He then brought forth the stranger's ass, and bade him "Fare thee well."

"Hold," said the Elamite, "my saddle, the spread of many colors, and the strings attached to it, together with my merchandise, where are they?"

"What?" exclaimed Hidud.

"I gave into thy keeping," returned the other, "a beautiful spread with gayly colored strings,

and bales of silk, and a bag of precious stones, and thou didst place them in thy treasure chest."

"Ah!" said Hidud, pleasantly, "I will interpret thy dream. That thou hast dreamed of strings, signifieth that thy days will be prolonged even as strings may be stretched from end to end; that thou hast dreamed of a spread of many colors, signifieth that thou wilt one day possess a garden rich in flowers and luscious fruits."

The merchant answered:

"No, my lord, I dreamed not; I gave to thee a spread of many colors with strings and precious merchandise, and thou didst hide them in thy house."

And Hidud said:

"And I have interpreted thy dream. I have told thee its meaning, why dost thou go on to repeat it? For the interpretation of a dream I am paid four pieces of silver, but as thou art my guest, behold, I will ask of thee only three."

The stranger became full of wrath at this deceit, and he accused Hidud in the gate of Sodom of stealing his goods. Then, when each man had told his story, the judge said:

“Hidud speaks the truth; he is an interpreter of dreams; he is well known as such.”

And Hidud said to the stranger:

“And as thou art such a liar, thou must even pay me the full price, four pieces of silver, as well as for the four meals eaten in my house.”

“Willingly will I pay thee for thy meals,” replied the other, “if thou wilt but return my saddle and my goods.”

Then the two men wrangled with angry words, and the men in the streets joined on Hidud’s side, and they fought with the stranger to thrust him forth from the city, robbed of all his possessions.

Now it happened that Sarai had sent her servant Eleazer to Sodom to inquire concerning the welfare of Lot and his family. As he entered the

city, Eleazer observed the Sodomites fighting with the merchant whom Hidud had defrauded, and who, running to Eleazer, implored him for assistance.

"What are you doing to this poor man?" said Eleazer to the Sodomites; "shame upon you to rob and beat one who is a stranger in your midst!"

Then Hidud replied:

"Is he thy brother? What is our quarrel to thee?" and picking up a stone, he struck Eleazer with it on the forehead, causing his blood to flow freely in the street. When the Sodomite saw the blood, he caught hold of Eleazer, crying:

"Pay me my fee as a leech; see, I have freed thee of this impure blood; pay me quickly, for such is our law."

"What!" exclaimed Eleazer, "thou hast wounded me and I am to pay thee for it?"

Then Hidud turned to the judge and made again his demand for a fee.

"Thou must pay the leech his fee," said the judge, addressing Eleazer, "he has let thy blood, and such is our law."

Eleazer paid the money, and then lifting up the stone he struck the judge heavily with it, and the blood spurted out in a strong stream.

"There!" exclaimed Eleazer, "follow thy law and pay my fee to this man; I want not the money," and he left the place, taking with him the merchant of Elam, whom Abram received hospitably, and sent on his way with gifts.

For such acts were Sodom and her sister cities destroyed by fire from heaven, and only Lot and his family spared through God's love for His servant Abram.

The Power of Tears

TALMUDIC ALLEGORY

(From *The Hebrew Review*)

THREE days Isaac was dead in the heart of Abraham; for God had chosen him as a burnt-offering and the father refused not obedience. Silently Abraham ascended the steep height of Moriah, lost in painful reflection, when the friendly voice of his child aroused him: "Behold, my father! we have fire and wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering!" And onward they wound their way in silence.

And they came to the place of which God had told Abraham; and he built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and

took the knife to slay his son, and he cast one look of anguish up to heaven; for the boy lay mute upon the altar: he neither complained nor remonstrated, but he silently lifted his streaming eyes to heaven.

The silent tear that glistened in the eyes of both pierced the sky: its mute appeal ascended to the heavens, and pleaded before the mercy-seat of Him before whom silence is equal to eloquence.

And the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" and he said, "Here am I." And he said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him."

Joyfully the father received the destined victim, the son who was restored unto him; and he called the scene of his anguish and joy, "The Lord seeth." He seeth the silent tear in the eye of the sufferer; He seeth the mute anguish of the heart, which implores more fervently than the loudest appeal.

Moses and Jethro

BY RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH

WHEN Moses once on Horeb's rocky steep,
A banished man, was keeping Jethro's
sheep,
What time his flocks along the hills and dells
Made music with their bleatings and their bells,
He, by the thoughts that stirred within him drawn
Deep in the mountain, heard at early dawn
One who in prayer did all his soul outpour,
With deep heart-earnestness, but nothing more:
For strange his words were, savage and uncouth,
And little did he know in very sooth
Of that great Lord to whom his vows were made.
The other for a moment listening stayed,
Until—his patience altogether spent—
“Good friend, for whom are these same noises
meant?”

For Him who dwells on high? This babbling
vain,

Which vexes even a mortal ear with pain?

Oh, peace! this is not God to praise, but blame;

Unmannerly applause brings only shame:

Oh, stop thy mouth; thou dost but heap up sin,

Such prayer as this can no acceptance win,

But were enough to make God's blessings cease."

Rebuked, the simple herdsman held his peace,

And only crying, "Thou hast rent my heart,"

He fled into the desert far apart:

While with himself and with his zeal content,

His steps the son of Amram homeward bent,

And ever to himself applauses lent—

Much wondering that he did not find the same

From his adopted sire, but rather blame,

Who, having heard, replied:

"Was this well done?

What wouldst thou have to answer, O my son,

If God should say in anger unto thee—

‘Why hast thou driven My worshipper from Me?
Why hast thou robbed Me of My dues of prayer?
Well-pleasing offering in My sight they were,
And music in Mine ears, if not in thine.’
He doth its bounds to every soul assign,
Its voice, its language—using which to tell
His praise, He counts that it doth praise Him
well;

And when there is a knocking at heav’n’s gate,
And at its threshold many suppliants wait,
Then simple Love will often enter in,
Where haughty Science may no entrance win.
That poor man’s words were rougher husks than
thine,

Which yet might hold a kernel more divine,
Rude vessels guarding a more precious wine.
All prayer is childlike; falls as short of *Him*
The wisdom of the wisest Seraphim,
As the child’s small conceit of heavenly things;
A line to sound His depths no creature brings.

Before the Infinite, the One, the All,
Must every difference disappear and fall,
There is no wise nor simple, great nor small.
For Him the little clod of common earth
Has to the diamond no inferior worth ;
Nor doth the Ocean, world-encompassing,
Unto His thought more sense of vastness bring
Than tiny dew-drop ; atoms in His eye,
A sun and a sun-mote dance equally :
Not that the great (here understand aright)
Is worthless as the little in His sight,
Rather the little precious as the great,
And, pondered in His scales, of equal weight :
So that herein lies comfort, not despair,
As though we were too little for His care.
God is so great, there can be nothing small
To Him—so loving He embraces all,—
So wise, the wisdom and simplicity
Of man for Him must on a level be :

But being this, more prompt to feel the wrong,
And to resent it with displeasure strong,
When from Him there is rudely, proudly turned
The meanest soul that loved Him, and that yearned
After His grace. Oh, haste then and begone,
Rebuild the altar thou hast overthrown;
Replace the offering which on that did stand,
Till rudely scattered by thy hasty hand—
Removing, if thou canst, what made it rise
A faulty and imperfect sacrifice:
And, henceforth, in this gloomy world and dark,
Prize every taper yielding faintest spark,
And if perchance it burn not clear and bright,
Trim, if thou canst, but do not quench it quite.”

Moses Visits El Khoudr

By S. BARING-GOULD

(From *Legends of the Patriarchs and Prophets*)

ONE day, say the Mussulmans, Moses boasted before Joshua of his wisdom. Then said God to him, "Go to the place where the sea of the Greeks joins the Persian Gulf, and there you will find one who surpasses you in wisdom."

Moses therefore announced to the Hebrews, who continued their murmurs, that in punishment for their stiff-neckedness and rebellion they were condemned by God to wander for forty years in the desert.

Then having asked God how he should recognize the wise man of whom God had spoken to him, he was bidden to take a fish in a basket; "and," said God, "the fish will lead you to My faithful servant."

Moses went on his way with Joshua, having the fish in a basket. In the evening he arrived on the shore of the sea and fell asleep.

When he awoke in the morning, Joshua forgot to take the fish, and Moses not regarding it, they had advanced far on their journey before they remembered that they had neglected the basket and fish. Then they returned and sought where they had slept, but they found the basket empty. As they were greatly troubled at this loss, they saw the fish before them, standing upright like a man, in the sea; and it led them, and they followed along the coast; and they did not stay till their guide suddenly vanished.

Supposing that they had reached their destination, they explored the neighborhood, and found a cave, at the entrance to which were inscribed these words, "In the Name of the all-powerful and all-merciful God." Joshua and Moses, entering this cavern, found a man seated there, fresh

and blooming, but with white hair and a long white beard, which descended to his feet. This was the prophet El Khoudr.

Moses said to El Khoudr, "Take me for thy disciple, permit me to accompany thee, and to admire the wisdom God has given thee."

"Thou canst not understand it," answered the venerable man. "Moreover, thy stay with me is short."

"I will be patient and submissive," said Moses; "for God's sake, reject me not."

"Thou mayest follow me," said the sage. "But ask me no questions, and wait till I give thee, at my pleasure, the sense of that which thou comprehendest not."

Moses accepted the condition, and El Khoudr led him to the sea, where was a ship at anchor. The prophet took a hatchet, and cut two timbers out of her side, so that she foundered.

"What art thou doing?" asked Moses; "the people on board the ship will be drowned."

"Did I not say to thee that thou wouldst not remain patient for long?" said the sage.

"Pardon me," said Moses, "I forgot what I had promised."

El Khoudr continued his course. Soon they met a beautiful child who was playing with shells on the sea-shore. The prophet took a knife which hung at his girdle and cut the throat of the child.

"Wherefore hast thou killed the innocent?" asked Moses, in horror.

"Did I not say to thee," repeated El Khoudr, "that thy journey with me would be short?"

"Pardon me once more," said Moses; "if I raise my voice again, drive me from thee."

After having continued their journey for some way, they arrived at a large town, hungry and tired. But no one would take them in, or give them food, except for money.

El Khoudr, seeing that the wall of a large house, from which he had been driven away, menaced ruin, set it up firmly, and then retired. Moses was astonished, and said, "Thou hast done the work of several masons for many days. Ask for a wage which will pay for our lodging."

Then answered the old man, "We must separate. But before we part, I will explain what I have done. The ship which I injured belongs to a poor family. If it had sailed, it would have fallen into the hands of pirates. The injury I did can be easily repaired, and the delay will save the vessel for those worthy people who own her. The child I killed had a bad disposition, and it would have corrupted its parents. In its place God will give them pious children. The house which I repaired belongs to orphans, whose father was a man of substance. It has been let to unworthy people. Under the wall is hidden a treasure. Had the tenants mended the wall, they

would have found and kept the treasure. Now the wall will stand till its legitimate owners come into the house, when they will find the treasure. Thou seest I have not acted blindly and foolishly."

Moses asked pardon of the prophet, and he returned to his people in the wilderness.

The Death of Aaron

BY S. BARING-GOULD

(From *Legends of the Patriarchs and Prophets*)

MOSES was full of grief when the word of the Lord came to him that Aaron, his brother, was to die. That night he had no rest, and when it began to dawn towards morning, he rose and went to the tent of Aaron.

Aaron was much surprised to see his brother come in so early, and he said, "Wherefore art thou come?"

Moses answered, "All night long have I been troubled, and have had no sleep, for certain things in the Law came upon me, and they seemed to me to be heavy and unendurable; I have come to thee that thou shouldst relieve my mind." So they opened the book together and read from the

first word; and at every sentence they said, "That is holy, and great, and righteous."

Soon they came to the history of Adam; and Moses stayed from reading when he arrived at the Fall, and he cried bitterly, "O Adam, thou hast brought death into the world!" Aaron said, "Why art thou so troubled thereat, my brother? Is not death the way to Eden?"

"It is, however, very painful. Think also that both thou and I must some day die. How many years thinkest thou we shall live?"

Aaron.—"Perhaps twenty."

Moses.—"Oh, no! not so many."

Aaron.—"Then fifteen."

Moses.—"No, my brother, not so many."

Aaron.—"Then surely it must be five."

Moses.—"I say again, not so many."

Then said Aaron, hesitating, "Is it then one?"

And Moses said, "Not so much."

Full of anxiety and alarm, Aaron kept silence.

Then said Moses, gently, "O my beloved! would it not be good to say of thee as it was said of Abraham, that he was gathered to his fathers in peace?" Aaron was silent.

Then said Moses, "If God were to say that thou shouldst die in a hundred years, what wouldst thou say?"

Aaron.—"The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."

Moses.—"And if God were to say to thee that thou shouldst die this year, what wouldst thou answer?"

Aaron.—"The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."

Moses.—"And if He were to call thee to-day, what wouldst thou say?"

Aaron.—"The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."

"Then," said Moses, "arise and follow me."

At that same hour went forth Moses, Aaron,

and Eleazer, his son; they ascended into Mount Hor, and the people looked on, nothing doubting, for they knew not what was to take place.

Then said the Most High to His angels, "Behold the new Isaac; he follows his younger brother, who leads him to death."

When they had reached the summit of the mountain, there opened before them a cavern. They went in and found a death-bed prepared by the hands of the angels. Aaron laid himself down upon it and made ready for death.

Then Moses cried out in grief, "Woe is me! we were two, when we comforted our sister in her death; in this, thy last hour, I am with thee to solace thee; when I die, who will comfort me?"

Then a voice was heard from heaven, "Fear not; God Himself will be with thee."

On one side stood Moses, on the other Eleazer, and they kissed the dying man on the brow, and

took from off him his sacerdotal vestments to clothe Eleazer, his son, with them. They took off one portion of the sacred apparel, and they laid that on Eleazer; and then they removed another portion, and laid that on Eleazer; and as they stripped Aaron, a silvery veil of clouds sank over him like a pall, and covered him.

Aaron seemed to be asleep.

Then Moses said, "My brother, what dost thou feel?"

"I feel nothing but the cloud that envelops me," answered he.

After a little pause, Moses said again, "My brother, what dost thou feel?"

He answered feebly, "The cloud surrounds me and bereaves me of all joy."

And the soul of Aaron was parted from his body. And as it went up Moses cried once more, "Alas, my brother, what dost thou feel?"

And the soul replied, "I feel such joy that I would it had come to me sooner."

Then cried Moses, "Oh, thou blessed, peaceful death! Oh, may such a death be my lot!"

Moses and Eleazer came down alone from the mountain, and the people wailed because Aaron was no more. But the coffin of Aaron rose, borne by angels, in the sight of the whole congregation, and was carried into heaven, whilst the angels sang, "The priest's lips have kept knowledge, have spoken truth!"

The Death of Moses

TALMUDIC ALLEGORY

(From *The Hebrew Review*)

WHEN Moses, the faithful messenger of God, was to die, and his hour approached, the Lord assembled His angels, and said, "It is time to recall the soul of My servant; who among you will go and summon her to come into My presence?"

Then the princes of the angelic host, Michael and Gabriel, with all who stand before the throne of the Lord, implored, and said, "We are his: he has been our teacher; then let not us summon the soul of this man."

But Sammael, the leader of the rebellious angels, stood forth, and said, "Behold, here am I, send me." And he went.

Arrayed in wrath and cruelty, he descended, wielding the flaming sword in his right hand.

He rejoiced beforehand at the agony, the death-throe of the righteous. But when he came nearer, he beheld the face of Moses. *His eyes were not dim, nor his natural force abated.* The servant of the Lord wrote the words of his last song and the sacred Name. His countenance was resplendent, radiant with the peace and brightness of heaven.

The enemy of mankind stood abashed. His sword dropped out of his hand, and he hurried away. "I cannot bring the soul of this man," he said to the Lord, "for in him I have found nothing impure."

And the Lord descended to summon the soul of his faithful and beloved servant. Michael, and Gabriel, and the host of angels that stand before Him, followed in His train. They prepared Moses' bier, and surrounded it; and a voice was heard, "Fear not, I Myself will bury thee."

Then Moses prepared himself to die, and sanctified himself even as one of the seraphim sanctifieth himself. And the Lord called unto his soul and said, "My daughter! one hundred and twenty years is the term allotted for thy inhabiting My servant's earthly tenement. The time is expired; then come forth, and tarry not."

And Moses' soul answered and said, "O Lord of the universe! I know that Thou art God, the sovereign Ruler of all spirits and of all souls, and that the living and the dead are alike in Thy hand. From Thee I received Thy glorious law: I saw Thee in the flame; I ascended and went along the path towards heaven. Girt with Thy power, I entered the palace of Egypt's king; I took the crown from off the head of the proud Pharaoh, and did manifold signs and wonders in his land. I led forth Thy people, and parted the sea; and I made known Thy will unto the sons of man. I dwelt beneath the throne of Thy

glory; my hut was under the pillar of fire, and I have spoken with Thee face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. And is not all this enough for me? Receive me, therefore, for now I come to Thee."

The breath of the Most High touched the lips of Moses, whose soul departed in the touch. So Moses died at the mouth of God, who Himself buried him; and no man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day.

The Death of Moses

By GEORGE ELIOT

(From *Jubal and other Poems*)

MOSES, who spake with God as with his
friend,
And ruled his people with the twofold power
Of wisdom that can dare and still be meek,
Was writing his last word, the sacred name
Unutterable of that Eternal Will
Which was and is and evermore shall be.
Yet was his task not finished, for the flock
Needed its shepherd, and the life-taught sage
Leaves no successor; but to chosen men,
The rescuers and guides of Israel,
A death was given called the Death of Grace,
Which freed them from the burden of the flesh,
But left them rulers of the multitude
And loved companions of the lonely. This

Was God's last gift to Moses, this the hour
When soul must part from self and be but soul.

God spake to Gabriel, the messenger
Of mildest death that draws the parting life
Gently, as when a little rosy child
Lifts up its lips from off the bowl of milk
And so draws forth a curl that dipped its gold
In the soft white—thus Gabriel draws the soul.
“Go, bring the soul of Moses unto Me!”
And the awe-stricken angel answered, “Lord,
How shall I dare to take his life who lives
Sole of his kind, not to be likened once
In all the generations of the earth?”
Then God called Michaël, him of pensive brow,
Snow-vest and flaming sword, who knows and
acts:
“Go, bring the spirit of Moses unto Me!”
But Michaël, with such grief as angels feel,
Loving the mortals whom they succor, plead:

“Almighty, spare me; it was I who taught
Thy servant Moses; he is part of me
As I of Thy deep secrets, knowing them.”

Then God called Zamaël, the terrible,
The angel of fierce death, of agony
That comes in battle and in pestilence
Remorseless, sudden or with lingering throes,
And Zamaël, his raiment and broad wings
Blood-tinctured, the dark lustre of his eyes
Shrouding the red, fell like the gathering
night

Before the prophet. But that radiance
Won from the heavenly presence in the mount
Gleamed on the prophet's brow, and dazzling
pierced

Its conscious opposite: the angel turned
His murky gaze aloof and inly said:
“An angel this, deathless to angel's stroke.”

But Moses felt the subtly nearing dark:—

“Who art thou? and what wilt thou?” Zamaël
then:

“I am God’s reaper; through the fields of life
I gather ripened and unripened souls,

Both willing and unwilling. And I come

Now to reap thee.” But Moses cried

Firm as a seer who waits the trusted sign:

“Reap thou the fruitless plant and common
herb—

Not him who from the womb was sanctified
To teach the law of purity and love.”

And Zamaël baffled from his errand fled.

But Moses, pausing, in the air serene

Heard now that mystic whisper, far yet near,

The all-penetrating Voice, that said to him,

“Moses, the hour is come and thou must die.”

“Lord, I obey; but Thou rememberest

How Thou, Ineffable, didst take me once

Within Thy orb of light untouched by death.”

Then the Voice answered, "Be no more afraid:
With Me shall be thy death and burial."
So Moses waited, ready now to die.

And the Lord came, invisible as a thought,
Three angels gleaming on His secret track,
Prince Michaël, Zamaël, Gabriel, charged to
guard

The soul-forsaken body as it fell,
And bear it to the hidden sepulchre
Denied forever to the search of man.
And the Voice said to Moses: "Close thine eyes."
He closed them. "Lay thine hand upon thine
heart,

And draw thy feet together." He obeyed.
And the Lord said, "O spirit! child of Mine!
A hundred years and twenty thou hast dwelt
Within this tabernacle wrought of clay.
This is the end: come forth and flee to heaven."

But the grieved soul with plaintive pleading cried,
"I love this body with a clinging love:

The courage fails me, Lord, to part from it."

"O child, come forth, for thou shalt dwell with
Me

About the immortal throne where seraphs joy
In growing vision and in growing love."

Yet hesitating, fluttering, like the bird
With young wing weak and dubious, the soul
Stayed. But behold! upon the death-dewed lips
A kiss descended, pure, unspeakable—
The bodiless Love, without embracing Love
That lingered in the body, drew it forth
With heavenly strength and carried it to heaven.

But now beneath the sky the watchers all,
Angels that keep the homes of Israel,
Or on high purpose wander o'er the world
Leading the Gentiles, felt a dark eclipse:
The greatest ruler among men was gone.

And from the westward sea was heard a wail.
A dirge as from the isles of Javanim,
Crying, "Who now is left upon the earth
Like him to teach the right and smite the
wrong?"

And from the East, far o'er the Syrian waste,
Came slower, sadlier, the answering dirge:
"No prophet like him lives or shall arise
In Israel or the world forevermore."

But Israel waited, looking towards the mount,
Till with the deepening eve the elders came
Saying, "His burial is hid with God.
We stood far off and saw the angels lift
His corpse aloft until they seemed a star
That burned itself away within the sky."
The people answered with mute orphaned gaze
Looking for what had vanished evermore.
Then through the gloom without them and within
The spirits' shaping light, mysterious speech,

Invisible Will wrought clear in sculptured sound,
The thought-begotten daughter of the Voice,
Thrilled on their listening sense: "He has no
tomb.

He dwells not with you dead, but lives as Law."

The Death of Moses

BY RICHARD HENRY STODDARD

NOW Moses knew his hour of death was nigh;
For the Most High commanded Sammael
To fetch His servant's soul to Paradise—
Sammael, who, clothed in anger, grasped his
sword

To slay him, and would have slain, but for the
light
Wherewith his face shone, while his hand went
on

Writing the Incommunicable Name.

"What ails thee, Moses? Why art thou so pale?
What evil hath befallen us?" Zipporah asked.

And Moses said: "My hour of death is come!"
"What! must a man who has spoken with God
die thus?"

Thou, like a common man?" "I must, all must,
The angels Michael, Gabriel, Israfel,

God only is eternal, and dies not.

Where are my children?" "They are put to sleep."

"Wake them; for I must say farewell to them."

Beside the children's bed she wept and moaned:

"Wake, rise, and bid your father now farewell,

Orphans! for this is his last day on earth!"

They woke in terror. "Who will pity us

When we are fatherless?" "Who will pity them

When they are fatherless?" And Moses wept.

Then God spake to him: "Dost thou fear to die?

Or dost thou leave this earth reluctantly?"

And Moses said: "I do not fear to die,

Nor do I leave this earth reluctantly:

But I lament these children of mine age,

Who have their grandsire and their uncle lost,

And who will lose their father, if I die."

"In whom did she, thy mother, then confide,

When thou by her wast in the bulrush ark

Committed to the Nile?" "In Thee, O Lord!"
"Who hardened Pharaoh's heart, and gave thee
power

Before him and his gods, and to thy hand
A staff, to part the waters?" "Thou, O Lord!"
"And fearest to trust thy children unto Me,
Who am the Father of the fatherless?
Go, take thy staff and over the sea once more
Extend it, and thou shalt behold a sign
To strengthen thy weak faith," And he obeyed.
He took the rod of God, and, going down
To the desolate sea-beach, he stretched it there.
The sea divided, as when clouds are driven
Along the path of a whirlwind, and he saw
A black rock in it, whereunto he went;
And reaching soon the rock, a voice cried,
"Smite!"

He smote; it clave asunder, and therein,
At its foundation, was a little cleft,
And in that cleft, with a green leaf in its mouth,

A worm, which, lifting up its voice, cried thrice,
“ Praise be to God, who hath not forgotten me,
Worm that I am, in holy darkness here!
Praise be to Him, who cherishes even me ! ”
When the low voice was silent, heard of all
The angels in the pauses of their hymn,
For they ceased singing to behold that sign
Of God’s exceeding love, He spake again :
“ Thou seest that I consider and provide
Not for man only, but for a little worm,
In a rock whereof men know not, in the waves,
Far in the dark depths of the barren sea.
Shall I forget thy children who know Me ? ”
Then Moses, so instructed of the Lord,
Comforted his children, and his sorrowing wife ;
And, leaning on his staff, went forth alone,
To climb the mountain where he was to die ;
And where, when he had closed his weary eyes,
And pressed his hand upon his pulseless heart,
God kissed His servant, and he was with Him.

Gilboa

By E. H. PLUMPTRE

(From *Master and Scholar*)

I.

SO life is ending, and its visions pass
Before the inward eye,
Like soft dew falling on the tender grass,
When all around is dry.

Through the dark night I see the ruby flush
Of childhood's earliest day;
Through war's wild din, and battle's torrent rush,
I hear the children play.

Yet once again I live that time of might,
When I, and one with me
Who bore my shield, were conquerors in the fight,
And made the aliens flee.

From crag to crag we clambered, hand in hand,
And leapt from rock to rock ;
Till from the height we looked on all the land,
And dared the battle's shock.

I feel the faintness of that noontide heat,
The thirst that fired the brain ;
I taste the golden stream that trickled sweet,
And brought life back again :

The fear of death is on me as of old,
When Saul in sternness strove
An iron mantle round his heart to fold,
And crush a father's love ;

I stood as one condemned to shameful death,
And offered up my life,
As Isaac bowed of old, with calmest breath,
To meet the glittering knife :

When shrill and loud from warriors old and
young

There rose the awe-struck cry ;
Their strong resolve through hill and forest rung,
" This day shall no man die ! "

So with my father many a month passed on,
I smote the craven foe ;
And year by year the crown of victory won,
Requiting blow for blow.

So grew my soul to manhood's kingly noon,
And all men sang my praise ;
Yet darker far than night without a moon
Was fame's full daylight blaze.

I craved for one whose heart should beat as mine,
My hopes and thoughts to share ;
A soul to live with me the life divine,
And half grief's burden bear.

I sought for one to be my friend and guide,
My glory and my joy ;
When lo ! there stood in brightness by my side
The minstrel shepherd-boy.

II.

Yes, there he stood, and life's deep-hidden foun-
tains

Welled from my soul in one abounding flood ;
The sun shone brighter on the hoary mountains,
A sweeter music murmured through the wood.

It was not for the flush of youthful beauty,
The golden locks that flowed like sunlight
down ;
Through eye's wild flash there gleamed the star
of duty,
And on his brow Truth set her kingly crown.

Strong arm was his to smite the tyrant stranger,
Voice soft as maiden's stirring men to tears,
A soul that knew no fear of death or danger,
Wide thoughts of wisdom ripening with the
years :

Forth from his lips there flowed the song of glad-
ness,
His hand brought music from the soulless lyre ;
And lo ! the spell chased all the clouds of madness,
Wrath passed away as wax before the fire.

Of warriors old he sang, our fathers' glory,
The wonders of the nobler days of old ;
And strong, deep music thrilled through all the
story,
Stirring all hearts to deeds of prowess bold.

He sang the marvels of the earth and heaven,
The starry night, the cloud-built tent of God,
The wild, dark storm on wings of tempest driven,

The snow-clad heights where never man has
trod :

And new light streamed o'er mountain and o'er
river,

New voices mingled with the streamlet's song ;
Men's hearts rose up to meet the Eternal Giver,
The slave found freedom, and the weak grew
strong.

And oh ! my heart clave to him as he chanted
The hymns that made the brain and spirit
thrill ;

I found the prize for which my soul had panted,
The friend and guide of thought, and heart,
and will.

I track that love throughout life's varied chances ;
And still my heart is with him to the last,
Though all our glory wane as his advances,
His the bright future, ours the failing past.

III.

I gave him, in that first bright hour of meeting,
My robe, and sword, and shield;
And ofttimes since in every secret greeting,
In forest or in field,

That sacrifice of self on true love's altar,
I of free choice renewed;
Nor shall my spirit fail or purpose falter,
With woman's varying mood.

I trust he loves me still, but love's requiting . . .
What need for that to bless?
Though he should stand a foe against me fighting,
I should not love him less;

Though from his hand should dart the spear to
slay me,
I could not him deny;

No other love have I whereon to stay me,
And when that fails I die:

I dream that he will give a little weeping
Above my fameless grave;
I trust my orphan child to his true keeping
From shame and death to save:

So, though my lineage from the earth shall perish,
Yet faithful to the end,
He still, through kingly state and strife, may
cherish
The memory of his friend.

IV.

That music soft, of tender touch and tone,
That drew the living fount from heart of stone,
Is hushed and passed away;
Now falls the darkness thicker, and mine eye
Looks out upon the starless, moonless sky,
The dreary, lonely way.

The king, my father, turned in wild despair
To priest and seer, with unregarded prayer,
 Seeking for truth and light;
They answered not, the Urim hid its gleams,
No vision of the future came in dreams,
 But all was dreariest night.

And so with frenzy, as of one who feels
The curse of God fall on him while he kneels,
 He in his maddened moods
To Endor turned, where still in cavern drear
Dwelt one, whose name had been a word of fear,
 In sullen solitudes.

I shudder yet at what I saw and heard,
The spectral form, the whispered, muttering
 word,
 The spells that raise the dead,
The low wild chaunt that came like mourner's
 wail,

When o'er the grave sweeps fast the northern
gale,
The lurid light and red.

The kingly face with terror wan and white,
The tall form stretched upon the earth all night,
The weariness and woe;
The dreary hours between the midnight black
And day's first gloaming, pale and faint and slack,
The minutes moving slow;

The fixed despair, the wild and vacant eye
Of one who hates his life, yet cannot die,
Though even hope is gone.
Dark end, my father, this of all thy fame,
The songs and shouts that heralded thy name
The cry of battle won;

Dark end of all the loftier hours of life
When, raised awhile above its little strife,
Thy soul rose up to heaven,

And Saul the prophet, bursting into praise,
Sang the great hymns of earlier, holier days,
 Forgiving and forgiven.

Ah! even yet I dream there lingers still,
Through wildest storms, and wanderings of the
 will,

 The man that God will own ;
That loftiest hour thou canst not all forget,
That glory of the past is with thee yet,
 That music from the Throne.

Yes, he shall own it in whose minstrel notes
A higher strain than priest's or prophet's floats,
 The Spirit from on high ;
His voice shall sing of father and of son,
Who, still unsevered, soul and heart still one,
 In death's dark chamber lie.

Lovely and pleasant yet our names shall be ;
The guilt, the shame, the woe, the pain, shall flee ;

And, as the shadows fall,
Amid the surging storm, and battle's roar,
We with calm steps approach the eternal shore,
Where peace reigns over all.

The Dawn

TALMUDIC ALLEGORY

(From *The Hebrew Review*)

HAST thou seen the beauteous dawn, the rosy harbinger of day? Its brilliancy proceeds from the Apartment of God; a ray of the Imperishable Light, and consolation to man.

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As David, pursued by his foes, passed a dreadful night of agony in a dreary cleft of Hermon's rock, he sung the most plaintive of his psalms: "Lions and tigers roar around me; the assembly of the wicked have encompassed me; and no help is near."

When, behold, the dawn broke; with sparkling eyes the roe of morning sprung forth, moved over hills and plains, and, like a messenger of the

Deity, addressed the fugitive on the sterile rock: "Why dost thou complain that no help is near? I emerge from the obscurity of the night; and the terrors of darkness must yield before the genial ray of the cheerful light."

His eye continued fixed on the purple hue of the dawn, and he felt consoled. He saw it arise, and become the sun in its splendor, pouring blessing and happiness over the earth. Confidence and hope once more entered his soul; his plaintive lament became a hymn of joy; he called it "the roe of the morning,* the song of the rosy dawn."

Often in aftertimes, he repeated this psalm to thank his God for those perils of his younger years which he had overcome; and amidst the sorrows of his latter years that psalm ever cheered his desponding soul. . . .

Daughter of the Creator, holy dawn, thou who every morning dost look down, and inaugurate

* Psalm xxii: על אילת השחר

heaven and earth, look on me, too, and inaugurate
my heart, that it may be pure, an altar devoted
to thy Maker.

The Royal Singer

TALMUDIC ALLEGORY

(From *The Hebrew Review*)

THE royal singer had sung one of his most beautiful psalms to the glory and praise of Him who had been his help in every need. The last notes still vibrated on the strings of his harp, when Satan stood beside him, and tempted the heart of the king to be proud of his song. "Amongst all Thy creatures," he exclaimed, "hast Thou, O Lord, one who praises Thee more melodiously than I do?"

Through the open window, before which he spread his hands in prayer, a grasshopper flew into the king's room, and seated itself on the hem of his robe. She began her clear matin-song; a number of grasshoppers assembled around her. One nightingale came, and soon

numbers of nightingales sang the praises of their Creator.

The ear of the king was opened ; he heard the concert of all animated nature : the splashing of the brook, the rustling of the woods, the voice of the morning star, the enrapturing song of the rising sun.

Lost in the high harmony of the voices which unceasingly and unweariedly sung, the king remained silent. He thought his song excelled even by the grasshoppers which still chirped on the hem of his robe. Humility again entered into his soul ; he took his harp, and gave vent to his feelings, as the musical strings resounded with his admiration. " Praise ye the Lord," he sung, " all ye his creatures. Praise thou likewise the Lord, my inmost heart ! my soul, join humbly in His praise."